



THE PHYSICIAN'S *Bookshelf*

CANCER CELLS—E. V. Cowdry, Director, Wernse Cancer Research Laboratory, Washington University, St. Louis, formerly President, American Association for Cancer Research. W. B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia, 1955. 677 pages, 137 figures, \$16.00.

Dr. Cowdry is a nonmedical scientist who has been a prominent figure in cancer research for many years. Originally an anatomist, his interests subsequently turned to microanatomy (Textbook of Histology), intracellular morphologic and chemical differences between normal and cancer cells, geriatrics (Problems of Aging), and organizational contributions to the International Union against Cancer and the American Association for Cancer Research, in both of which he has held the highest office.

With this sort of background, it is not surprising that "Cancer Cells" offers admirable discussion of such subjects as the cytoplasm of normal and "malignant" cells, nuclear differences, mutations and the controversy over viruses as cancer agents. There is also valuable reference material on heredity, geographic frequency and physical and chemical carcinogens.

For physicians this book would seem to have little appeal and even less of real value. To quote from the author's preface: "In many chapters I am open to criticism for straying from an account strictly limited to cancer cells . . . This book is moreover uneven chiefly because my training is uneven and especially inadequate in clinical medicine, physics and chemistry." The validity of this self criticism is apparent in the annoyingly discursive fashion employed in any approach to the natural history of cancer, while the sections dealing with such clinical subjects as prevention, diagnosis and treatment contain abundant evidence that both the philosophy and practice of medicine is the province of doctors of medicine, rather than of distinguished nonclinical scientists.

It is surprising to find in these pages an adherence to the evangelistic propaganda of a decade or more ago. In the section on treatment, it is said that "each of the over 200,000 persons dying annually is an emergency." This reviewer also thinks it is naive to suggest that "the greatest step in the prevention of cancer would be removal of the psychological block against consulting physicians."

A chapter entitled (rather ungrammatically) "Single Trauma Cancers" bestows unmerited recognition on minor traumata as causative factors. Forty-two instances of squamous or basal cell carcinoma, all but one of the lip, face or dorsum of hand, ages from 40 to 87, are listed, and all alleged various cuts, burns or blows at intervals of 5 weeks to 14 years prior to diagnosis! These case reports are from the Barnard Free Skin and Cancer Hospital; one wonders what percentage of the total lip and cutaneous cancers these 42 constitute, and what percentage of a similar, control sample of the population in St. Louis would have suffered comparable trauma. Further violence to reason is committed by closing the chapter with quotations from judicial opinions; some years ago Dr. Fred Stewart remarked that if trauma

caused cancer, expert medical witnesses should develop gliomas!

The format, printing and binding are handsomely done. There is an extensive, well chosen bibliography relating to basic cancer research.

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HANDBOOK OF PEDIATRICS. Henry K. Silver, M.D., Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Yale University School of Medicine; C. Henry Kempe, M.D., Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, U. C. School of Medicine, and Henry B. Bruyn, M.D., Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Medicine, U. C. School of Medicine and Assistant Clinical Professor of Pediatrics, Stanford University Medical School. Lange Medical Publications, Los Altos, 1955. 548 pages, \$3.00.

This handbook is intended to supplement rather than replace the standard pediatric texts. As such, it does an excellent job. It should prove useful to the medical student, general practitioner and pediatrician. In condensed and semi-outline form, it contains up-to-date essentials for the diagnosis and management of most pediatric situations encountered in the home, the office or the hospital. Immunological tests, normal growth and developmental data, mental health principles, laboratory tests and treatment procedures are well represented.

The book is small and compact enough to fit into a doctor's bag. The information it contains would appear to warrant a place there in the case of physicians caring for children.

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SHOULD THE PATIENT KNOW THE TRUTH?—A Response of Physicians, Nurses, Clergymen and Lawyers— Edited by Samuel Standard, M.D., and Helmuth Nathan, M.D., Springer Publishing Company, Inc., 44 East 23rd Street, New York 10, N. Y., 1955. 160 pages, \$3.00 hard cover, and \$2.00 soft cover.

No one should expect to find in this book a definite, positive answer to the question "Should the Patient Know the Truth?" Almost every conceivable part of this question has been discussed from some viewpoint. What is truth? How much of it can or should be told? What the patient deserves and expects are all given answers of one kind or another.

The difficult role of the nurse or those who attend the patient during the time he is ill and away from his doctor is well presented by several thoughtful and penetrating chapters written by qualified nurses.

The religious aspects of this problem are adequately delineated by a priest, rabbi and protestant minister.

While the patient's viewpoint is expressed by a physician patient the book would be more complete if several non-professional patients had been invited to write chapters. In striving for completeness there is much repetition.

Several quotations from literature summarize the general tone throughout most of the book.

"The idea that the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth can be conveyed to the patient is an example of